

Incident Command Standard Operating Procedures

A-017

Date: 4-1-1998

INCIDENT COMMAND PROCEDURES

The effective functioning of the Union Vale Fire Department units and personnel at incidents requires clear decisive action on the part of an Incident Commander. This procedure identifies the standard operating procedures to be employed in establishing command and operating a Command Post. It also fixes responsibility for the command function and its associated duties on one individual at any time during the operations.

The Incident Commander is responsible for the command functions at all times. As the identity of the Incident Commander changes, through transfers of command, this responsibility shifts with the title. The term "Command" in this procedure refers jointly to both the person and the function. Identity of the Incident Commander will be as per Chain of Command.

CHAIN OF COMMAND (IDENTIFIER "UNION VALE COMMAND")

1. The Chief or Acting Chief will be the Incident Commander at all incidents at which the Fire Department is called.
2. The First Assistant Chief will be the Incident Commander at all incidents until such time as any of the above arrive.
3. The Second Assistant Chief will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
4. The Captain will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
5. The First Lieutenant will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
6. The Second Lieutenant will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
7. The Senior Firefighter will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
8. The Driver/Pump Operator of the first on scene engine will be the Incident Commander until such time as any of the above arrive.
9. Captains and Lieutenants will be responsible for fire ground authority as assigned by the Incident Commander (search, rescue, ventilation, overhaul, water supply, etc.)
10. The following numbers will be assigned to the Chief Officers:
 - o 67-1 - Fire Chief
 - o 67-2 - 1st Assistant Chief
 - o 67-3 - 2nd Assistant Chief

Command Procedures are designed to accomplish the following:

1. Fix the responsibility for Command on a certain individual through a standard identification system independent of the arrival sequence of members, companies, and officers.
2. Insure that strong, direct, and visible Command will be established as early as possible in the operation.

3. Establish an effective framework outlining the activities and responsibilities assigned to Command.
4. Provide a system for the orderly transfer of Command to subsequent arriving officers.
5. Command is responsible for four basic fireground objectives:
 - **PROVIDE FOR THE SAFETY AND WELFARE OF FIREFIGHTING PERSONNEL.**
 - **REMOVE ENDANGERED OCCUPANTS AND TREAT THE INJURED.**
 - **CONFINE AND EXTINGUISH THE FIRE.**
 - **CONSERVE PROPERTY AFTER FIRE CONTROL IS ACHIEVED.**

Command is responsible for the following functions as required by the circumstances of the situation.

- w Assume and confirm Command and take an effective position.
- w Rapidly evaluate the situation (size-up).
- w Initiate, maintain, and control the communications process.
- w Identify the overall strategy, develop an attack plan, and assign units.
- w Develop an effective fireground organization.
- w Provide continuing Command within the framework of standard operating procedures.
- w Coordinate the transfer of Command as required.
- w Request and assign additional resources as required.
- w Return companies to service and terminate Command.

All of these functions are responsibilities of Command, whether or not Command is transferred from one individual to another. The first five (5) functions must be addressed immediately from the initial assumption of Command.

ESTABLISHING COMMAND

The first Incident Commander (see Chain of Command) to arrive at the scene SHALL assume Command and remain in command until relieved by a ranking Incident Commander or until the incident is terminated.

Exception: See PASSING COMMAND

Initial Report

The person assuming Command shall transmit a brief initial radio report including:

1. Identification on the scene, confirming assumption of Command and location. (I.e. 67-1 on the scene assuming Tymor Command.)
2. Building description (occupancy, size, arrangement, construction, and address).
3. Obvious fire conditions. (“CONFIRMED FIRE, FIRE SHOWING”)
4. Initial Action taken (brief description).
5. Any obvious safety concerns.

Radio Designation

The radio designation "COMMAND" will be used with a brief description of the incident location (i.e. "Tymor COMMAND"). This designation will not change through the duration of the incident.

COMMAND OPTIONS

In cases when the initial arriving Incident Commander is an officer, efforts should automatically be directed towards establishing a Command Post and fulfilling the listed Command functions.

The establishment of a Command Post is a priority at all working incidents. The location of the Incident Commander in a vehicle, which provides lighting, communications, equipment, reference items, and limited isolation from distractions, will make Command more effective.

When in Command the Incident commander must decide on an appropriate commitment for responding resources, which will usually fall into one of three general modes listed below.

1. ***Nothing Showing Mode:*** These situations generally require investigation by the first arriving engine while holding staged units at a distance. Normally the Incident Commander should go to check while utilizing a portable radio to command the incident.

2. ***Fast Attack Mode:*** Situations, which require action to stabilize the situation, such as interior fires in residences, apartments, or small commercial occupancies, require that the Incident Commander quickly decide how to commit resources. Where a fast interior attack is critical, utilization of the portable radio will permit the necessary involvement in the attack without neglecting Command responsibilities. This mode should not last more than a few moments and will end with one of the following:

- **Situation is stabilized.**
- **Command is passed to next arriving Incident Commander.**
- **A chief officer arrives and Command is transferred.**
- **Situation is not stabilized and the Incident Commander must withdraw to the exterior and establish a Command Post.**

3. ***Command Mode:*** Situations that require a strong command by virtue of the size of the fire, the complexity, or type of occupancy, or the possibility of extension require strong, direct, overall Command from the outset. In such cases, the Incident Commander will initially assume a Command position and maintain that position until relieved via the Chain of Command. Tactical worksheet should be utilized to assist in managing these situations.

The Incident Commander assuming Command has a choice of modes and degrees of personal involvement in the attack but continues to be fully responsible for the identified tasks assigned to the command function. In all cases, the initiative and judgment of the Incident Commander are of great importance. The modes identified are not strict rules but general guidelines to assist the Incident Commander in planning appropriate actions.

PASSING COMMAND

In certain situations, it may be advantageous for the first arriving Incident Commander to "Pass Command" to the next arriving driver or officer. This is indicated when the initial commitment of the first arriving resources requires their involvement in operations (i.e. a large building or an

immediate rescue situation), and the next arriving Incident Commander is on the scene or close behind.

The initial arriving Incident Commander will give an initial on scene radio report and advise that Command will be passed. The initial arriving driver or officer retains responsibility for Command until the next unit arrives and acknowledges the transfer. Dispatcher will confirm that the next unit assumes Command.

TRANSFERS OF COMMAND

The first driver or officer to arrive on the scene shall assume and retain command until relieved within the following guidelines:

Within the chain of command indicated above, the actual transfer of command will be regulated by the following procedures:

1. The Incident Commander assuming Command will communicate with the person being relieved by radio or preferably face-to-face on arrival.
2. The person being relieved will brief the Incident Commander assuming Command indicating the following:

A. General situation status

1. Fire location, extent, conditions
2. Effectiveness of control efforts
3. Safety considerations including name of safety officer

B. Deployment and assignments of operating resources.

C. Appraisal of needs for additional resources at that time.

The person being relieved should review the Tactical Plan with the command officer. This provides the most effective framework for Command transfer as it communicates the location and status of resources in a form that should be well known to all members.

The Incident Commander should eliminate all unnecessary radio traffic while responding unless such communications are required to insure that Command functions are initiated and completed. This requires the person initially in command to give a clear on-scene report and continue to give updated progress reports as needed.

The arrival of a ranking Incident Commander on the fireground does not necessarily mean Command has been transferred to that officer. Command is transferred only when the outlined communication functions have been completed.

The response and arrival of additional officers on the fireground strengthens the overall command function. All officers will exercise their Command prerogative in a supportive manner that will insure a smooth transition and the effective on-going function of Command.

The officer assuming Command will utilize the person relieved of Command to best advantage.

In cases where an individual is effectively commanding a tactical situation and is completely aware of the location and function of operating companies and the general status of the situation, it may be desirable for that person to continue as Incident Commander. In these cases, the arriving ranking Incident Commander may assume a supportive role in the overall command functions.

COMMAND FUNCTION

It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to develop an organizational structure, using standard operation procedures to effectively manage fireground operations. The development of the organizational structure should begin with the implementation of the initial tactical control measures and may continue through a number of phases, depending on the size and complexity of the particular situation. The objective must be to develop the command organization at a pace, which stays ahead of or even with the tactical development of resources.

The basic configuration of a Command structure includes three levels:

* **STRATEGIC LEVEL** - overall incident command

The Strategic Level involves the overall command of the incident and includes establishing major objectives, setting priorities, allocating resources, predicting outcomes, determining the appropriate mode of operations (offensive or defensive) and assigning specific objectives to Tactical Level Units

* **TACTICAL LEVEL** - direction of divisions and groups

The Tactical Level includes intermediate level officers directing activities toward specific objectives. Tactical Level officers include officers, in charge of grouped resources operating in assigned areas or providing special function at the scene of an incident. The accumulated achievement of tactical objectives should accomplish strategic level objectives.

* **TASK LEVEL** - unit activities.

The Task Level refers to those activities normally accomplished by individual units or specific personnel. Task Level activities are routinely supervised by company officers. The accumulated achievement of Task Level activities should accomplish tactical objectives.

The most basic structure for a routine incident involves only two levels. The role of Command combines the Strategic and Tactical levels. Units report directly to Command and operate at the Task Level.

In more complex situations, Command should group units to work in sectors. The sector officers operate at the Tactical Levels, directing the work of several groups and units or performing specialized functions as requested by Command. Command continues to operate at the Strategic Level, determining and directing the overall strategy to deal with the incident.

COMMAND POST ORGANIZATION

The responsibilities assigned to Command often require the involvement of more than one individual to manage Command functions. The officer in Command of a working incident is routinely assisted by and special resource advisors and other assigned personnel in managing information at the Command Post, gathering information by reconnaissance, assisting with communications and providing liaison. The Command Post organization may be expanded through the involvement of other officers and staff personnel to provide Incident Planning and/or Technical Support at the Command Post. The roles of the individuals performing these functions may vary, depending on the situation.

As the fireground organization grows in complexity, the Incident Commander may implement an additional intermediate level within the Command Post. The Control Level involves Operations Officers who provide direct supervision over Division/Group Officers and handle radio communications for the Incident Commander. This allows the Incident Commander to be

removed from the immediate pressures of radio traffic and to focus on the strategic aspects of the overall situation and management of the organization.

STRATEGIC LEVEL - Incident Commander

CONTROL LEVEL - Operations Officers

TACTICAL LEVEL - Sectors / Divisions / Groups

TASK LEVEL - Groups / Crews

Operations Officers function internally within the Command Post and assume responsibility for major segments of the fireground organization.

Operations Officers should be physically located at the Command Post and communicate with the Incident Commander on a face-to-face basis.

The function of Operations Officer is frequently initiated when a ranking officer assumes responsibility for overall Incident Command and elects to have the relieved officer continue to communicate to the sector officers. The relieved officer becomes the Operations officer.

Additional Operations Officers may be assigned to subdivide responsibilities within the Command Post. The Incident Commander may assign any available individuals to function as Operations Officers.

OPERATIONS OFFICER ASSIGNMENTS

Each Operations Officer is responsible for the direction of sector/tasking and functions. These should normally be grouped according to their similarities and related natures to provide the most effective organization.

Examples:

Fire Operations - All sectors involved in direct fire suppression actions and/or working within fireground perimeter.

Support Operations - Staging, Rehab, Support, etc.

Hazmat Operations - Hazard, Decontamination, etc.